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# Richard Perle and the inside battle against SALT

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## CLOSE-UP

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Nelson Rockefeller called him a Communist. Henry Kissinger tried to get him fired. Gerald Ford and Stansfield Turner both irately denounced him to his boss.

One U.S. senator accused him of spreading scurrilous stories, and another suggested he leaks classified information. "Ah, Perle," said a senior American statesman recently, "he's the blackest, most insidious figure."

In fact, all over town, whenever members of the disarmament community get together to hash over the problems of the upcoming Senate debate on SALT II, someone is apt to mutter glumly:

"Perle. If only we could get rid of Perle!"

"There are all kinds of people angry at me," says Richard Perle, Sen. Henry M. (Scoop) Jackson's right hand man in the battle against SALT. Feeding flour and eggs into a Pastamatic machine, which is making spaghetti in his kitchen, Richard Perle certainly doesn't look villainous at the moment.

"I can't help that," continues the soft-spoken, wiry-haired Perle. "You can't get anything done in Washington without being controversial." He opens the oven door to check a pan of braised endive. "They (administration arms control experts) would much prefer to make decisions in the absence of informed criticism."

As the Senate prepares to take up the recently concluded arms agreement, Jackson's powerful and controversial aide is

smack in the center of the hard-liners' determined opposition. And when his work is done, Perle predicts that the treaty as it now stands will never pass the Senate.

"I can't find 67 votes (the number required for ratification) for this thing, no matter how hard I try," he says.

Almost everyone agrees that Richard Perle, 37, is one of the most knowledgeable people in town on SALT. They also agree on one more point. "He intimidates a lot of people in town," says one administration official, who, like many sources in the sensitive arms control field, asked not to be named. "They're scared to do things because Perle might get them."

But there the agreement ends. Because depending on whom you talk to, Richard Perle is either an arrogant, dangerous dogmatist or a warm-hearted, patriotic hero.

To his detractors, he is a supremely condescending, abrasive, win-at-all-costs zealot who doesn't hesitate to use distortion, threats and dangerous leaks to achieve his ends. He is a man who once got so angry at Sen. Gaylord Nelson that he threatened to travel to Wisconsin and personally campaign against him in his re-election race.

He is a man who is said to have supplied — and then bragged about — a hit list of enemies who were subsequently purged from the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. A man whose reputation for leaking to the press so angered Sen. John Culver that he denounced the practice before a Senate subcommittee.

"To this day, I've never heard of a staffer doing the things that Richard does," says a veteran Senate staffer in awe. "I'd be fired if I did the things he does."

Nonsense, says Richard Perle.

Ridiculous, says Scoop Jackson.

"The whole controversy," says Jackson, "is over one word: jealousy. Richard Perle can take Cabinet officers and their best experts and stand them on end. They know it. They would like to see him out of the picture."

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